Volume 10, Issue 28   Atari Online News, Etc.   July 11, 2008

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->From the Editor's Keyboard   "Saying it like it is!"
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""

The long July 4th weekend is one of my favorite weekends of the year. I
think we cooked on the barbecue grill every day this past week; and the
food was terrific (ok, insert personal conceit here!). I think that I
gained a few pounds; and I will quickly blame my mother-in-law for her
role in all of this because she supplied a lot of the food to cook. It's
okay, I'll work off those extra pounds in no time!

The weather has been fairly good this past week, but we're just now
getting out of that warm day, thunderstorms evening weather pattern. We
had to finally get some medication for one of our dogs because she was
getting so stressed out with the thunder. It also didn't help that our
neighborhood had its share of fireworks going off all week. Hopefully
these meds will help calm her down during the spells of bad weather!

So otherwise. it's been a quiet week. Other than a little regular
maintenance, all of my outdoor projects are done. Well, I still have a
load or two of mulch to spread, but that's no big deal. The gardens are
coming along nicely; and I hope to start seeing some vegetables shortly.
The flowers and other plants are looking great. Even the lawn is
finally starting to look better. Gee, I wonder if any of this is related
to all that rain we've been getting?!

Well, on with the show!

Until next time...

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Protext and Prodata To Be Available for Free Download

Since Arnor Ltd went bust, the two programmers and I have been supplying
and supporting the PC versions of Protext v6.7 and its database
companion Prodata v1.23 through Protext Software.

We have now decided the time is right to make it, and the latest Atari
and Amiga versions, available for free download, so we are doing just
that.

It is being arranged now and as soon as I have a URL to post here, I
will.
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Brian Watson (for Protext Software)

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
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Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, another it's been warm and humid
here in the northeast. That kind of mirrors my mental weather this past
week.

As you know, I'm a political kind of guy, and have never hesitated to
get into a political discussion. I'm currently considering starting a
political blog along the lines of the Huffington Post, the Daily Kos,
or our old friend Charles F. Johnson's Little Green Footballs. There's
so much to take into account... not just what blog software I might
want to use, but posting policies, advertising, generating revenue,
etc. I just don't know. The political stuff would be the EASY part.
Politicians today don't seem to have a problem with supplying fodder
for commentary. Just ask Phil Gramm and Jessie Jackson.

Throwing Bill Clinton's name around is always good for generating
interest, as is Hillary's name. Taxes, healthcare, war, terrorism,
Darfur, immigration... there's no shortage of things to blog about and,
believe me, I've got opinions on just about everything.

I guess only time will tell if blogging will be my 'thing' in the near
future, or if I'll drop the idea and move on to something else.

I will, however, tell you that I'm already disgusted with the current
campaigns. Sometimes I think if I have to sit through another political
ad or commercial that spends its time telling me why "the other guy" is
a terrible choice while telling us nothing about the candidate that's
paying for or sponsoring the ad, I'm going to just put my foot through
the darned television.

I'll tell you what they should do... they should make it illegal to
mention anyone but the candidate that the ad is sponsored by or in
favor of. Swiftboat Veterans for Truth? Give me a break. They were
neither Swiftboat Veterans nor truthful. The ONE good thing about them
is that they've lent their name to a particular vein of dirty
politics... "Swiftboating"... say that word, and just about everyone
will know what you're talking about.

Heck, the current administration swiftboated John McCain four years
before the swiftboated John Kerry. And the RNC is swiftboating him
again now. As the campaign goes on, you're going to see more and more
things that are going to make you say, "that doesn't make any sense"
and "how could they let that happen".

Trust me; it's not that they'll 'let' it happen, but that they'll MAKE it happen. You don't have to believe me now... just keep your eyes and ears open for the next four or five months.

Well, that's enough of that, eh? Let's tune in to see what's new on the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Lee Hanken asks about what people use for hard drive drivers for their Mega STs:

"Hi, I have a working Mega ST 2, and wondered if anyone else has this particular type of atari with a hard drive, what hardware and driver software are you using, and how you are finding it?'

Ben at Bravo Sierra Computers tells Lee:

"My Mega ST4 has a 1.2 Gig SCSI Hard Drive, CD ROM and I just got a FlatBed SCSI Full Color Scanner, thanks to Ed Baiz Jr.! I get on the Internet with my Flash Terminal Software, my 14,400 MoDeM and Dialup with UNIX Shell Connection! I use ICD Drivers for my SCSI Hard Drive Setup!"

PPetra adds:

"Mega ST with 4MB upgrade. IDE adapter in expansion slot - there may attach any IDE drive, CD ROM, Compact Flash cards... Driver SW is same as HW - made by me. For CD ROM or DVD used MetaDOS."

Our pal Ronald Hall adds:

"Well, I've got a Mega ST2, upgraded to 4 megs of RAM, ADSpeed accelerator (16mhz), TOS v1.04, 4 gig hard drive, with a SCSI CD-Writer, in an external box. I use it to run DarkForce (my BBS)."

Dave Wade tells Lee:

"I have an Mega ST2 which sadly only produces green video. I keep meaning to get it fixed, but every time I plan a drive across to Barry at Keychange something crops up. I used to have a "BBDP" hard drive adaptor and their own software. These days I use HD Driver, but to be honest I don't really have time to fiddle with my Ataris."

Jim DeClercq adds his equipment to the list:

"Mega STe, TT030, Stacy needing new hard drive, and an ST or so, including one with a memory upgrade by JRI (John Russel Industries) personally, and more than one Portfolio.

My problem has been finding drives that do not drag down the machine

bus, and make unpredictable things not work. When 4 gig drives were first made, 4 out of 12 worked on any Unix system, including Atari MiNT.

What I have found are marginal. I have bought many, through E-Bay, and scrapped most of them. The ones I kept HDDriver recognizes, formats, but will not partition, since some of the full command set do not work on these drives. So, I use ICD Pro Tools to format and partition, and if for more than four partitions, I add two partitions not enabled, and the fact that the last two partitions are not recognized when one boots into HDDriver has no effect.

This is from a TT030, running MiNT, with an internal 4-gig drive partitioned to C-J with ICD Pro Tools, with two extra not-enabled partitions, (K and L) and a 4-gig external drive partitioned to K and L as LNX partitions with ICD Pro Tools, and all of this boots and runs under HDDriver.

My SCSI bus at the moment has that external MiNT drive, and the newest Phillips IDE DVD and whatever drive on a icd to scsi bridge card.

This is all at the cost of about thirty scsi 4-gig hard drives, which hit the trash, all to get me back to where I was years ago, with all bus slots filled with something useful.

Mega Ste has a 2-gig drive. I do not remember the details, but DISCUS tells me that ICD Pro Tools once partitioned it. It boots from HDDriver 8.20."

Guillaume Tello asks about using software to set serial port attributes on the MegaSTE and TT:

"How [do you] set, by software (not using a CPX) the serial speed of the TT/MSTE ports to a speed greater than 19200?
For example, I'd like to communicate at 115200 bauds, how can I do it?"

George Gnkua tells Guillaume:

"According to the Atari Compendium,
http://www.fortunecity.com/skyscraper/apple/308/html/chap4.htm#serial,
"Rsconf() and Iorec() set the communication mode and input/output buffers of the currently mapped serial port. You should note that while some ports support transfer rates of greater than 19200 baud, this is the limit of the Rsconf() call. Other rates must currently be set in hardware (or with the Fcntl() when MiNT is present)."

Unfortunately how it should be set in hardware is not clear. I guess next ide would be taking a look at the mint sources to find any clues."

Patrice Mandin adds:

"Rsconf() XBIOS function only supports up to 19200 bauds.

As far as I remember, most high speed serial TSR (like HSmodem) replace the slower speeds (50,75) with high speed ones (115200,230400). But I don't know if you can query the new/real baud rate.

If you really want to set high speed on a serial port, you'll have to resort to call Fcntl() on a serial port device (HSModem provides it for TOS, you have it by default under MiNT)."

Guillaume now asks about an updated version of AtariWorks:

"I have read about a beta version of AtariWorks 2.0, does anyone have it? And I have also read about a book "Papa's Grafik Guide to AtariWorks", anyone willing to sell it?"

Lonny Pursell tells Guillaume:

"Atari Works 2.0 (Beta)

http://dev-docs.atariforge.org/files/works2.zip

There was no docs with it, so I don't know what has changed. Found it on some CD-ROM I had purchased."

Guillaume downloads it and tells Lonny:

"Thanks a lot! I could get it to run under Multitos, but not plain TOS. And again the french RSC files were not accepted."

Mark Bedingfield offers:

"Here is the newest version I've found, 1.207

http://atariforce.free.fr/falcapuk.htm

You can substitute the English language files from earlier versions if I remember correctly."

Guillaume replies to Mark:

" Thanks, that's the one I have too.
Does anyone know how to print automatically the page number in Atari Works? For example, I'd like to get at the bottom of every page: Introduction, page nˆ ´°# "

Brian Watson adds:

"The free download release of Protext v6.6 is on the way, if you can wait."

Guillaume tells Brian:

"The fact is that I have a very long document created with AW. And translating it to another soft would be a long job! Unless Protext loads directly AW files?..."

Brian replies:

""Possibly."

I regret I do not now have an Atari to try it out and I'm reluctant to
say it can unless I have tested it."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next time around,
same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying
when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - 'Beer' Is Too Strong!
   """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Legendary Games Return!
                                     E3 Forecast!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

             For Nintendo, 'Beer' Is Too Strong for Wii Owners

According to the co-founders of JV Games, Nintendo asked them to change
the name and some of the content of their upcoming WiiWare title because
of one word: "beer." Their game, originally titled Frat Party Games -
Beer Pong, was renamed to the more family friendly Frat Party Games -
Pong Toss.

This conflicts with some of Nintendo of America President Reggie
Fils-Aime's statements last year about how "Nintendo will not do any
screening of ideas" on WiiWare. JV Games co-founder Vince Valenti recalls
how they "had a little discussion with Nintendo and there were some angry
parties." The two founders were shocked by Nintendo's reaction. As
Valenti puts it, his company's use of the word "beer" was "just like you
would hear in any movie or on TV." Co-founder Jag Jaeger said they
"wanted to focus on the sport of beer pong, not the alcohol that's
associated with it."

The sport in question is a college drinking game staple and consists of
a table with pyramids of cups laid out on each end. These cups are
filled with beer and the goal of the game is to throw a ping pong ball
into your opponent's cups until they are all gone. Whenever a cup is
hit, the opponent has to drink the beer in the cup.

Frat Party Games - Pong Toss still includes almost everything that was in the original build of the game, including using the Wii Remote's motion sensing capabilities to throw the balls, and a crowd that "still says authentic college-ish things like 'Loser,' 'What was that?' and 'I've got the munchies.'" The only changes are in the name, the now-empty red plastic cups, and in the new throw power meter, now transformed into a bullet that merely resembles the glass of beer it's replaced.

JV Games hopes to have Frat Party Games - Pong Toss out for WiiWare sometime in July.

'Space Invaders,' 'Arkanoid' Return

In 2028, when 3D holodecks are in every strip mall and we'll be able to have games downloaded directly into our brains, we'll look back wistfully on the hits of 2008. Wasn't "Grand Theft Auto IV" quaint, we'll muse. Aren't our alien overlords much nicer than that nasty Locust Horde in "Gears of War 2"?

That's assuming that the games of today have the staying power of those we played 20 years ago. Every time someone cracks open a fresh new game like "Grid" or "Metal Gear Solid 4," someone else is discovering or revisiting a classic like "Frogger" or "Donkey Kong." Sometimes I'll dip into "Ms. Pac-Man" or "Tetris," only to realize a couple hours later how quickly the time has passed.

The legendary games of the 1970s and '80s have been subjected to frequent updates, which usually dilute the charm of the originals. Taito, however, has refurbished two of its biggest hits with some clever innovations that should please newcomers and old fans alike.

* "Space Invaders Extreme" (Square Enix, Nintendo DS, PlayStation Portable, $19.99): Five rows of aliens are slowly approaching, and you have to destroy them with your laser cannon before they land. That's the essence of "Space Invaders," which celebrates its 30th anniversary this year with an electrifying revamp.

The first thing fans will notice is that the bunkers, which you could hide your ship behind, are gone. There are far fewer enemies onscreen at any time; during the occasional "boss" encounters, you may be facing just one big alien. The levels zip by really quickly, and most players will be content to simply rest a thumb on the fire button and blast away.

If you want to rack up high scores, though, you need to keep one simple strategy in mind: Try to hit aliens of the same color consecutively. If you succeed, you're blessed with more powerful weapons or shields. That simple addition adds some real juice - and a lot of replay value - to a time-tested formula, making "SIE" a bargain at only $20. Three stars out of four.

* "Arkanoid DS" (Square Enix, Nintendo DS, $19.99): One of my favorite games of the '80s was Taito's "Arkanoid," a variation on Atari's "Breakout," in which the object was to destroy a cluster of blocks by bouncing a ball into them. "Arkanoid" innovated by adding power-ups that, for example, made your paddle longer, slowed down the ball or gave you lasers that you could used to shoot the blocks directly.

"Arkanoid DS" delivers 140 levels with increasingly difficult formations
to eliminate. The major addition is a "quest" mode that lets you tackle
any of the screens you've already completed but tacks on some
restraints. You may be given a time limit, for instance, or be limited
to hitting the ball a certain number of times.

The "Arkanoid" makeover isn't as radical as "Space Invaders Extreme,"
but the core gameplay holds up. (Both games, by the way, allow
multiplayer competition.) It's a solid little portable time-killer that
outclasses most newer puzzle games. Two-and-a-half stars.

* "Blast Works: Build, Trade, Destroy" (Majesco, Wii, $39.99): "Blast
Works" doesn't have the name recognition of the Taito titles, but it
certainly has the look and feel of an old-school arcade game. Based on
an indie PC game, it's essentially a side-scrolling shooter like
"R-Type" or "Gradius."

It adds one brilliant gimmick: when you destroy an enemy, you can add
its weapons to your vehicle. Enemies' parts cling to your ship,
sometimes awkwardly; if a gun is pointing up when it gets stuck, it will
fire bullets upward. The haphazard buildup of parts around your ship
makes "Blast Works" look like a cross between "Defender" and "Katamari
Damacy."

The package includes a basic editing program that lets you build your
own levels. It's a bit more complicated than it needs to be, but does
offer the promise that other users will be creating new levels that you
can download once you're finished with the main game. "Blast Works"
looks primitive, even compared with some '80s favorites, but it's
certainly original. Two-and-a-half stars.

* "Space Invaders Extreme": http://www.taito.com/csm/title/2008/sie/

* "Arkanoid DS": http://www.taito.com/csm/title/2008/arkanoid* ds/

* "Blast Works": http://www.blastworksgame.com/

                 Holiday Titles, Price Cuts in Focus at Game Show

As top video game makers gather next week in Los Angeles for the E3
trade show, they will be touting hot titles, new online offerings and,
potentially, console price cuts to drum up gamers' support.

The mood on the event floor is expected to be festive, with the game
business having thus far weathered sluggish consumer spending and
soaring oil prices - in stark contrast to the gloom and uncertainty
hanging over many other industries.

"The major message that's going to come out of it is that the industry
is very strong now," said BMO Capital Markets analyst Edward Williams.
"Demand for hardware right now remains robust."

Nintendo Co Ltd's Wii enjoys a clear lead against Sony Corp's PlayStation
3 and Microsoft Corp's Xbox 360 in the current console cycle. All three
are expected to lay out plans during the show on how they expect to drive
new demand for their machines.

Game fans are awaiting Nintendo's lineup of holiday titles, while Sony is set to unveil a video download service for its PlayStation 3, and Microsoft is expected to cut prices for its Xbox 360 console.

Nintendo, which has spurred Wii sales with blockbuster titles like "Wii Sports" and "Wii Fit," has disclosed little about its software lineup for the rest of the year, leaving both gamers and investors on tenterhooks

"I've been covering this company since 1999. I've never been so unaware of what their big year-end titles are at this point in the year," Credit Suisse analyst Jay Defibaugh said.

The creator of iconic video game characters Mario and Zelda is expected to wade into interactive music video games with "Wii Music," a new entrant into a market dominated by "Rock Band," distributed by Electronic Arts Inc, and Activision Blizzard Inc's "Guitar Hero" series.

Sony, which had enjoyed a decade-long dominance in the game industry since the mid-1990s, plans to launch a movie and TV episode downloading service for the PS3 this summer to boost the machine's appeal. The details have yet to be announced.

Sony Computer Entertainment Chief Executive Kazuo Hirai told reporters last month that the PS3 is already connected to big-screen TVs ready for high-definition video, making it a device that can straddle the worlds of video game and non-game content as well as packaged and downloaded media.

Sony Computer Entertainment, the video game unit of Japanese electronics and entertainment conglomerate Sony, has lagged behind Microsoft in creating a online network to rival the software maker's Xbox Live service.

Analysts expect Microsoft to stir up demand for the Xbox 360, which, in recent months, has been competing with the PS3 for second place in the U.S. market, with price reductions.

Media reports have said the best-selling Xbox 360 Pro model could soon see its price cut by $50, to $299. Microsoft has declined comment.

The price cut is likely to come "if not at E3, then shortly around that time," DFC Intelligence analyst David Cole said.

A counter price cut for the PS3 is unlikely as Sony aims to turn its video game business profitable this year.

"Their priority now is not on selling it in bulk, but on profitability and on various network-related challenges," said Mizuho Securities analyst Takeshi Koyama.

Besides announcements and developments from the three console makers, a slew of heavy-hitting games from third-party publishers will be attracting attention at E3.

"Gears of War 2," created by Epic Games exclusively for Xbox 360, is expected to be one of the most anticipated titles at the show. The original "Gears," released in November 2006, sold 3 million copies in its first 10 weeks, and gave a strong boost to Xbox 360 hardware sales.

Other high-profile titles include action horror "Resident Evil 5" from
Capcom Co Ltd and "Rock Band 2," which is set for September launch and
includes a replica Fender Stratocaster lined with a wood-grain finish.
Rock Band 2, developed by Harmonix Music Systems Inc, will be published
by Viacom Inc's MTV Games and distributed by Electronic Arts.

"The guitar looks awesome ... It's amazing how accessories are really
becoming important," Janco Partner research analyst Mike Hickey said.
"There's a lot of room for growth in 'Guitar Hero' and 'Rock Band'
land."

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Icahn Pitches Microsoft Deal to Yahoo Shareholders

Activist shareholder Carl Icahn said Monday that he is still interested
in doing a deal with Microsoft, if he can persuade shareholders to oust
the current board at Yahoo on Aug. 1.

In a letter sent to Yahoo shareholders, Icahn argued that shareholders
should replace chief executive Jerry Yang and other executives, if they
in fact wish to sell the company to Microsoft. Icahn said that he had
held discussions with Microsoft over acquiring the company or its search
business, which Microsoft confirmed.

"Much has been said about how badly the Yahoo! board has 'botched up'
negotiations with Microsoft over the past months. There is no need to
keep pointing out the mistakes I believe Yahoo! made by not immediately
taking a $33 offer made by Microsoft," Icahn said in his letter. "But
one thing is clear - Jerry Yang and the current board of Yahoo! will
not be able to "botch up" a negotiation with Microsoft again, simply
because they will not have the opportunity."

Microsoft, meanwhile, said that it was still interested in purchasing
Yahoo, an on-again, off-again negotiation process that has taken place
over several months. Yahoo executives have consistently rejected offers
to sell the company. Meanwhile, Yahoo's stock price has tumbled, to
$21.35 at press time. Microsoft originally bid $31 per share before
officially calling off talks last month.

"We confirm, however, that after the shareholder election Microsoft
would be interested in discussing with a new board a major transaction
with Yahoo!, such as either a transaction to purchase the "Search"
function with large financial guarantees or, in the alternative,
purchasing the whole company," Microsoft said.

In his letter, Icahn argued that Yahoo's board was simply not doing what
was right for the company.

"Our company is now moving toward a precipice. It is currently losing market share in its 'Search' function; our current Board has failed to bring in a talented and experienced CEO to replace Jerry Yang and return Jerry to his role as Chief Yahoo!, and currently it is witnessing a meaningful exodus of talent," Icahn said. "It is no secret that Google (which hired a great operator as CEO) continues to dramatically outperform Yahoo!. According to publicly available information, Google's income from operations grew 59% per year over the last two years while Yahoo!'s shrank 21% per year. However, none of the above has caused the Yahoo! board to hesitate in paying themselves $10,000 per week. IT IS TIME FOR A CHANGE."

"However, Steve made it clear to me that if a new board were elected, he would be interested in discussing a major transaction with Yahoo!, such as either a transaction to purchase the "Search" function with large financial guarantees or, in the alternative, purchasing the whole company," Icahn added. "He stated that Microsoft would be willing to enter into discussion immediately if the new board that has been nominated were elected."

Privacy Protections Disappear with A Judge's Order

Credit card companies know what you've bought. Phone companies know whom you've called. Electronic toll services know where you've gone. Internet search companies know what you've sought.

It might be reassuring, then, that companies have largely pledged to safeguard these repositories of data about you.

But a recent federal court ruling ordering the disclosure of YouTube viewership records underscores the reality that even the most benevolent company can only do so much to guard your digital life: All their protections can vanish with one stroke of a judge's pen.

"Companies have a tremendous amount of very sensitive data on their customers, and while a company itself may treat that responsibly ... if the court orders it be turned over, there's not a lot that the company that holds the data can do," said Jennifer Urban, a law professor at the University of Southern California.

In the past, court orders and subpoenas have generally been targeted at records on specific individuals. With YouTube, it's far more sweeping, covering all users regardless of whether they have anything to do with the copyright infringement that Viacom Inc., in a $1 billion lawsuit, accuses Google Inc.'s popular video-sharing site of enabling.

It's a scenario privacy activists have long warned about.

"What we're seeing is (that) the theoretical is becoming real world," said Lauren Weinstein, a veteran computer scientist. "The more data you've got, the more data that's going to be there as an attractive kind of treasure chest (for) outside parties."

U.S. District Judge Louis L. Stanton dismissed privacy arguments as speculative.

Last week, Stanton authorized full access to the YouTube logs - which few users even realize exist - after Viacom and other copyright holders argued that they needed the data to prove that their copyright-protected videos for such programs as Comedy Central's "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart" are more heavily watched than amateur clips.

"This decision makes it absolutely clear that everywhere we go online, we leave tracks, and every piece of information we access online leaves some sort of record," Urban said. "As consumers, we should all be aware of the fact that this sensitive information is being collected about us."

Mark Rasch, a former Justice Department official who is now with FTI Consulting Inc., said the ruling could open the floodgates for additional disclosures.

Though lawyers have known to seek such data for years, Rasch said, judges initially hesitant about authorizing their release may look to Stanton's ruling for affirmation, even though U.S. District Court rulings do not officially set precedence.

The YouTube database includes information on when each video gets played. Attached to each entry is each viewer's unique login ID and the Internet Protocol, or IP, address for that viewer's computer - identifiers that, while seemingly anonymous, can often be traced to specific individuals, or at least their employers or hometowns.

Elsewhere, search engines such as Google and Yahoo Inc. keep more than a year of records on your search requests, from which one can learn of your diseases, fetishes and innermost thoughts. E-mail services are another source of personal records, as are electronic health repositories and Web-based word processing, spreadsheets and calendars.

One can reassemble your whereabouts based on where you've used credit cards, made cell phone calls or paid tolls or subway fares electronically. One can track your spending habits through loyalty cards that many retail chains offer in exchange for discounts.

Though companies do have legitimate reasons for keeping data - they can help improve services or protect parties in billing disputes, for instance - there's disagreement on how long a company truly needs the information.

The shorter the retention, the less tempting it is for lawyers to turn to the keepers of data in lawsuits, privacy activists say.

With some exceptions in banking, health care and other regulated industries, requests are routinely granted.

Service providers regularly comply with subpoenas seeking the identities of users who write negatively about specific companies, at most warning them first so they can challenge the disclosure themselves. The music and movie industries also have been aggressive about tracking individual users suspected of illegally downloading their works.

Law enforcement authorities also turn to the records to help solve crimes.

The U.S. Justice Department had previously subpoenaed the major search engines for lists of search requests made by their users as part of a

case involving online pornography. Yahoo, Microsoft Corp.'s MSN and Time Warner Inc.'s AOL all complied with parts of the legal demand, but Google fought it and ultimately got the requirement narrowed.

In the YouTube case, Viacom largely got the data it wanted.

Google has said it would work with Viacom on trying to ensure anonymity, and Viacom has pledged not to use the data to identify individual users to sue. The YouTube logs will also likely be subject to a confidentiality order.

But privacy advocates warn that there's no guarantee that future litigants will be as restrained or that data released to lawyers won't inadvertently become public - through their inclusion as an attachment in a court filing, for instance.

And retailers, government agencies and others are regularly announcing that personal information, stored without adequate safeguards, is being stolen by hackers or lost with laptops or portable storage drives.

"You just never know," said Steve Jones, an Internet expert at the University of Illinois at Chicago. "There are some circumstances under which what seems to be private information is going to be shared with a third party, and the court says it's OK to do that."

Watch Out for An IE Zero-Day Attack

Microsoft yesterday warned of a new attack underway against a flaw in the ActiveX control for the Snapshot Viewer for Microsoft Access, used by IE. There is not yet any patch available for the zero-day security hole, and the attacks likely focus on business targets.

In its security advisory, Redmond says the vulnerable control installs with "all supported versions of Microsoft Office Access except for Microsoft Office Access 2007. The ActiveX control is also shipped with the standalone Snapshot Viewer." A poisoned Web page that exploits the hole could surreptitiously download malware to a victim PC.

"Active, targeted attacks" are underway on a relatively small scale, according to the advisory. Targeted attacks typically involve more careful planning and crafting, and may use a victim's name and title in a socially engineered e-mail with a link to a malicious site, for example. I usually only see targeted attacks against businesses, which fits given the vulnerability in Microsoft Access. So watch out for this while you're at work.

The US-CERT vulnerability report doesn't inspire hope: "We are currently unaware of a practical solution to this problem." You can set what's known as a kill bit for this particular ActiveX control to prevent it from running in IE, but doing so could prevent you from viewing Access report snapshots, and it involves mucking with the Windows Registry. See this Microsoft Support Page for kill bit instructions (the CLSID is in the security advisory).

The US-CERT report also says that IE 7's ActiveX opt-in feature should help mitigate the vulnerability, which the Microsoft advisory surprisingly doesn't mention. That should mean that you'd get a prompt

before running the control on a poisoned page, and would have a chance to stop it before it attacked your computer.

If you have the choice, it may be a good idea to use Firefox until this hole is fixed. And if you're still on IE 6 at work, hammer on your IT to get you upgraded. Every security expert I talk to says you're basically asking for it if you surf the web with the outdated browser. If there's a particular in-house app that only works with IE 6, then use Firefox as your default Web browser, and only fire up IE 6 for that old app.

The Internet Gets a Patch, as DNS Bug Is Fixed

Makers of the software used to connect computers on the Internet collectively released software updates Tuesday to patch a serious bug in one of the Internet's underlying protocols, the Domain Name System (DNS).

The bug was discovered "by complete accident," by Dan Kaminsky, a researcher with security vendor IOActive. Kaminsky, a former employee of Cisco Systems, is already well-known for his work in networking.

By sending certain types of queries to DNS servers, the attacker could then redirect victims away from a legitimate Web site - say, Bofa.com - to a malicious Web site without the victim realizing it. This type of attack, known as DNS cache poisoning, doesn't affect only the Web. It could be used to redirect all Internet traffic to the hacker's servers.

The bug could be exploited "like a phishing attack without sending you e-mail," said Wolfgang Kandek, chief technical officer with security company Qualys.

Although this flaw does affect some home routers and client DNS software, it is mostly an issue for corporate users and ISPs (Internet service providers) that run the DNS servers used by PCs to find their way around the Internet, Kaminsky said. "Home users should not panic," he said in a Tuesday conference call.

After discovering the bug several months ago, Kaminsky immediately rounded up a group of about 16 security experts responsible for DNS products, who met at Microsoft on March 31 to hammer out a way to fix the problem. "I contacted the other guys and said, 'We have a problem,'" Kaminsky said. "The only way we could do this is if we had a simultaneous release across all platforms."

That massive bug-fix occurred Tuesday when several of the most widely used providers of DNS software released patches. Microsoft, Cisco, Red Hat, Sun Microsystems and the Internet Software Consortium, makers of the most widely used DNS server software, have all updated their software to address the bug.

The Internet Software Consortium's open-source BIND (Berkeley Internet Name Domain) software runs on about 80 percent of the Internet's DNS servers. For most BIND users, the fix will be a simple upgrade, but for the estimated 15 percent of BIND users who have not yet moved to the latest version of the software, BIND 9, things might be a little more difficult.

That's because older versions of BIND have some popular features that were changed when BIND 9 was released, according to Joao Damas, senior program manager for the Internet Software Consortium.

Kaminsky's bug has to do with the way DNS clients and servers obtain information from other DNS servers on the Internet. When the DNS software does not know the numerical IP (Internet Protocol) address of a computer, it asks another DNS server for this information. With cache poisoning, the attacker tricks the DNS software into believing that legitimate domains, such as Bofa.com, map to malicious IP addresses.

Security researchers have known about ways to launch these cache poisoning attacks against DNS servers for some time now, but typically these attacks require that attackers send a lot of data to the DNS server they are trying to infect, which makes the attacks easier to detect and block. However, Kaminsky discovered a far more effective way to launch a successful attack.

Because Kaminsky's flaw lies in the design of DNS itself, there is no easy way to fix it, Damas said. Instead, companies like ISC have added a new security measure to their software that makes it harder for cache poisoning to work.

In the long run, however, the most effective way to deal with cache poisoning will be to adopt a more secure version of DNS, called DNSSEC said Danny McPherson, chief research officer with Arbor Networks. Tuesday's fix is basically "a hack that makes it a lot more difficult," he said. "But it doesn't fix the root problem."

Kaminsky says he will give network administrators a month to patch their software before revealing more technical details on the flaw at next month's Black Hat conference in Las Vegas. In the meantime, he has posted code on his Web site that allows users to see if their corporate or ISP's DNS server has been patched.

Yahoo BOSS Opens Search Technology to Developers

In a move to build partnerships with third-party developers, Yahoo on Thursday introduced a new open Web services platform. Yahoo Search BOSS (Build Your Own Search Service) gives outside developers unprecedented access to Yahoo's search technology, including the ability to re-rank and control the presentation of results.

Yahoo launched BOSS as an API in beta and said it will enable developers and companies to build world-class custom search experiences and disrupt the search industry.

BOSS extends Yahoo's Open Strategy by giving developers access to its search infrastructure. This builds on the recent launch of Yahoo's SearchMonkey developer platform, which opened up the Yahoo search-results page to allow site owners and developers to create enhanced search results.

"Today, the search market is generally limited to three major search engines to drive innovation and growth," said Prabhakar Raghavan, chief strategist for Yahoo Search. "BOSS opens up the playing field for

developers and companies to disrupt the search market, become principals in search and build new Web search experiences that offer more choice for users."

Yahoo said BOSS will make it more economical for companies to build Web-scale search experiences. BOSS will also generate revenue for Yahoo's partners. Over the next several months, Yahoo plans to introduce a BOSS monetization capability using Yahoo search advertising and potentially other models to create a search revenue stream.

From a design perspective, BOSS lets developers control the presentation and ranking of Web search results as well as unlimited queries per day. Its framework allows developers to blend Yahoo Search results from Web, news and image indexes with any data source from across the Web. Over time, the company said other Yahoo Search indexes will become available.

BOSS will offer two options for companies and developers. Immediately, developers can begin using the BOSS self-service API and the mashup framework tools. The BOSS Custom service will be offered to select partners with large-scale needs.

Some observers are supposing that Yahoo is acting in sheer desperation, but the move to open the search platform is consistent with Yahoo's disclosed plans. Greg Sterling, principal analyst at Sterling Market Intelligence, said the initiative might be likened to a more ambitious version of the Google Custom Search Engine.

"If you are take a skeptical view you could say that BOSS is a ploy, but I don't think it's a last-minute reaction," Sterling said. "Whether or not it will it do much for Yahoo in a practical matter remains to be seen. I don't think in the near term Yahoo will see much benefit from this, but if it really takes off, then in a year it could make an impact."

Yahoo is compelled to experiment. If strategy A isn't working, Sterling said, then you try strategy B. Sterling sees BOSS as Yahoo's move to open up and become a desirable partner for third parties. "It's a policy change more than anything," he said. "Yahoo is liberalizing a set of policies to encourage third parties to use their tools."

Yahoo has also partnered with top technology universities to drive search experimentation and innovation. Researchers will now be able to conduct open research on search engines that was impossible in the academic environment, the company said.

Specifically, Yahoo is currently working with Carnegie Mellon University, the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Purdue University, Stanford University, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Congress Studies How People Track Your Online Use

Executives from major Internet players - Microsoft Corp., Google Inc. and Facebook Inc. - are due for a grilling about online privacy in a Senate committee Wednesday, but the company likely to get the most scrutiny is a small Silicon Valley startup called NebuAd Inc.

NebuAd has drawn fierce criticism from privacy advocates in recent weeks for working with Internet service providers to track the online behavior of their customers and then serve up targeted banner ads based on that behavior.

According to Ari Schwartz, vice president of the Center for Democracy & Technology, a civil liberties group, NebuAd's business model raises many of the same concerns as an earlier generation of "adware" companies. Those companies developed software programs that - when downloaded to a computer - could track where a user went on the Internet and mine that information to deliver customized online ads. Several NebuAd executives in fact were once employed by Gator Corp., an adware company that later renamed itself Claria Corp.

Privacy activists say adware companies duped many Web surfers into downloading their software programs by bundling them with free screen savers, online games and other Internet applications. But NebuAd has a new twist: It works directly with Internet service providers to scan their customers' Web surfing habits and deliver ads presumed to be of interest to them.

By injecting its monitoring in between consumers and the Web sites they visit, NebuAd's technology could violate a 1986 federal wiretapping law that requires at least one party to a communication to consent to a wiretap, according to an analysis released Tuesday by the Center for Democracy & Technology. British technologists have leveled similar criticisms against a NebuAd-like system being prepared in that country by Phorm Inc.

"This is analogous to AT&T listening to your phone calls all day in order to figure out what to sell you in the middle of dinner," said Robert Topolski, a technology consultant to Public Knowledge and Free Press, two other public interest groups that have raised concerns about NebuAd.

Although no major Internet service providers are known to have partnered with NebuAd so far, a number of smaller ones have worked with the company, including Wide Open West, a privately held broadband company based in Denver.

Amid the publicity surrounding NebuAd, however, Wide Open West has stopped using the company's advertising software. And other ISPs that had been planning to conduct trials with the technology, including Charter Communications Inc., have put those plans on hold.

For its part, NebuAd has stressed that it does not collect any personally identifiable information about consumers and that it requires Internet service providers to notify their subscribers about its advertising system. On Tuesday, however, the Redwood City, Calif., company unveiled a new set of privacy protections, including an online notification system and an opt-out mechanism for consumers.

"NebuAd is committed to driving innovation in online advertising while pioneering industry-leading privacy practices," NebuAd chief executive Bob Dykes said in a statement.

Besides NebuAd, Wednesday's hearing in the Senate Commerce Committee may also examine Facebook's "Beacon" monitoring tool, which tracked online purchases made by Facebook members and sent alerts to their friends on the site.

In addition, the committee will explore the need for stronger online privacy protections in general. Among the issues on the table: whether Internet companies should be expected to make their programs "opt-in" (you're automatically excluded from a service unless you sign up) or whether "opt-out" (you're automatically in unless you speak up to say no) is acceptable.

While the committee has no online advertising legislation pending, the hearing could lead to new bills. The committee will also examine the potential role of agencies such as the Federal Trade Commission or the Federal Communications Commission. Last year, for example, the FTC released a set of proposed self-regulation guidelines for online advertising companies.

Witnesses testifying Wednesday include NebuAd's Dykes, Microsoft associate general counsel Mike Hintze, Google chief privacy counsel Jane Horvath and Facebook chief privacy officer Chris Kelly. Lydia Parnes, director of the consumer bureau for the Federal Trade Commission; Leslie Harris, chief executive of the Center for Democracy & Technology; and Clyde Wayne Crews Jr., vice president for policy at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, will also testify.

FCC Chairman Seeks to Discipline Comcast

In what may be an early test of enforcing open-access rules for the Internet, the head of the Federal Communications Commission said Thursday that he will seek to have Comcast punished for violating openness guarantees.

According to the Associated Press, FCC Chairman Kevin Martin said his agency "has adopted a set of principles that protects customers' access to the Internet," and Comcast violated those principles. The FCC policy to which Martin refers is a 2005 set of principles.

The violation involved Comcast's blocking of Internet traffic between users exchanging large downloads via a file-sharing application. Martin told AP that Comcast "arbitrarily" blocked access without regard to how much bandwidth was actually being used, and did not tell those customers about the actions.

The FCC chairman was to outline his recommendation for enforcement action to other FCC commissioners Friday, and a vote will be held on August 1. The action would make Comcast cease blocking while informing the FCC about what it has done, and telling consumers what its policies will be.

A spokesperson for Comcast denied it blocks content or services, and said its actions were part of "carefully limited measures" that it takes to make sure all its customers receive quality service.

The FCC's action followed a complaint by Free Press, a nonprofit group that supports network neutrality. Neutrality is the concept that all Internet traffic should be treated equally. Some Internet service providers have advocated the ability to adjust charges for either different levels of service or different kinds or levels of content.

Larry Hettick, an analyst with industry research firm Current Analysis, noted that less than 10 percent of Internet consumers use 40 percent or more of Net bandwidth. He noted that this asymmetry raises several questions, such as whether it's fair to the other 90 percent. A user's connection speed might slow, for instance, because of a neighbor's downloading high-definition movies, yet both pay the same.

This problem is only going to get worse, Hettick said, as huge downloads such as high-definition movies become commonplace. He described Comcast's actions as "a bit bold" in that it apparently didn't make the policy or actions evident, but he noted that cutting off bandwidth abusers is commonplace among satellite providers of Internet service.

Hettick said a solution should involve making the terms of a service more obvious, although he noted that Comcast's is a "best effort" service. The ultimate solution, he said, is to set up service model classes for consumers, where a user can pay more for higher capacity.

Microsoft Says EU Court's Fine "Excessive"

Microsoft has told a European Union court that an antitrust fine of 899 million euros ($1.4 billion) against it is both excessive and disproportionate, the Court of First Instance said on Monday.

On February 27 the European Commission found that Microsoft used high prices to discourage competition, failing to carry out sanctions imposed against it as part of a long-running case. Microsoft is appealing against the fine imposed in February.

"The Commission failed to take due account of the fact that the contested decision only concludes that the royalties allegedly established by Microsoft under one particular license ... were unreasonable," the court said in summarizing Microsoft's arguments, published in the EU's Official Journal.

A Commission spokesman disagreed.

"The Commission is confident that its decision to impose the fine was legally sound," Jonathan Todd said.

The company argued that the Commission made a "manifest error" by labeling its rates as unreasonable without considering that they were "intended to facilitate negotiations between Microsoft and the prospective licensees."

As well, Microsoft and the Commission had agreed to have a trustee review the rates if need be, in a mechanism that had been used in another case, Microsoft argued.

The Commission also erred by the yardstick that it used in requiring Microsoft to establish its trade secrets were innovative, ignoring many arguments prepared by patent experts, the company said.

"The Commission also denied Microsoft's right to be heard," because it failed to give the company a chance to give its views at the end of the period for which it was fined, Microsoft said.

The Commission has said it imposed the fine because the U.S. software group had defied a 2004 order from Brussels to provide information to competitors on reasonable terms.

Microsoft has been fined a total of 1.68 billion euros by the EU for abusing its 95 percent dominance of PC operating systems through its Windows operating system.

The 899 million euro fine was the biggest ever imposed on a company by the EU executive.

The Commission initially fined Microsoft 497 million euros in March 2004 for withholding interoperability information for "work group server" software and for deliberately damaging rivals by tying its Windows Media Player to its Windows system.

Microsoft unsuccessfully appealed against that penalty and was also later fined 280.5 million euros by the Commission for non-compliance.

The latest fine picked up from where the 280.5 million euro penalty left off, covering the period from June 21, 2006 until October 21, 2007.

The company announced its appeal of the latest fine in May.

DOJ Drops Criminal Probe into Apple Options

The U.S. Justice Department has decided not to file charges against Apple Inc, leader Steve Jobs and other current or former executives in a probe of backdated employee stock options, lawyers for the people targeted in the investigation said on Wednesday.

Apple, the fast-growing consumer electronics company, is one of more than 200 mostly high-tech companies that have been investigated for irregularities over their accounting for stock options awarded to employees over the past decade or so.

Three of the attorneys in the case told Reuters that the Justice Department had decided to drop its criminal inquiry.

A spokesman for Apple declined to comment.

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission had launched an investigation for backdating options grants to Jobs, the company's co-founder and chief executive. Apple's own probe found no wrongdoing by Jobs or current management.

The SEC later cleared the company after it cooperated with the investigation, but the agency sued former Apple Chief Financial Officer Fred Anderson and former General Counsel Nancy Heinen last year.

"There was never any basis to bring charges against Nancy, so it is no surprise that the government reached this conclusion," Cristina Arguedas, Heinen's lawyer, said of the DOJ's decision. "We were always confident that after a full and fair review of the facts there could be no other outcome."

The SEC case relies on testimony from a lower-ranking former Apple

lawyer, Wendy Howell, who testified she was asked by Heinen to falsify minutes of meetings of Apple's board of directors that never took place.

Thomas Carlucci, Howell's lawyer, said that she would not be charged either by the DOJ.

The DOJ's decision was first reported by the Wall Street Journal, which cited people familiar with the case.

The U.S. attorney's office in San Francisco, which was handling the case, did not immediately return a call seeking comment.

AOL: Fee Up 20 Percent for Some Plans with Phone Help

If you're still paying for AOL, your bill may be going up 20 percent this month.

AOL's cheapest dial-up Internet access plan is going from $9.99 to $11.99 to offset costs of round-the-clock help by telephone. Subscribers can keep the $9.99 rate if they forgo full phone support, but they must actively change their plans to avoid an automatic price increase.

Millions of AOL users have already ditched subscription plans entirely now that the company is giving away free AOL.com e-mail accounts and other features as part of a push to generate more revenue from its free, ad-supported Web sites.

AOL's parent company, Time Warner Inc., is even working on splitting its access and advertising businesses, a move that could lead to the sale of one or both.

As of March 31, AOL had 8.7 million U.S. subscribers for Internet access, fewer than a third of its peak of 26.7 million in 2002. AOL no longer breaks down subscribers by pricing plan, though it said most are on a $25.90 premium plan, which remains unchanged.

The low-end plan offers either unlimited dial-up access with basic security software, or 10 hours of dial-up with additional security services.

Even with the price increase, AOL's plans are still competitive. EarthLink Inc.'s cheapest dial-up plan, at $12.50 a month, requires a year of prepayment, while United Online Inc.'s Juno and NetZero $9.95 services charge for phone help - Juno also requires a year's commitment.

Of course, if you have no need for dial-up access or extras like technical support, you can cancel your account and still keep your e-mail address.

On the Net:

https://bill.aol.com/changePlan/changePlan.adp

Gmail Allowing Remote Log-off in Case You Forget

One of the benefits of Web-based e-mail is the ability to log on from just about anywhere - at home, at work, a friend's house, a mobile device or even a public library or cybercafe.

But what if you forget to log off? Someone else who encounters an active session not only can read your personal correspondences, but they also can use that account to grab your passwords from many online services that offer to send reminders via e-mail.

Google Inc.'s Gmail service is trying to address that by letting you know if you're still logged on elsewhere and giving you a chance to disconnect remotely.

At the bottom of a Gmail inbox is a small notice of other active sessions. The new feature, being rolled out to users in waves, also offers some information on the time and location of recent Gmail activities.

The notification is bound to be useful, though it's by no means foolproof. You have to be log on somewhere to learn of other active sessions, and you have to look carefully for that notice. And if you have chosen to save your password on the other computer, someone else can simply log back on unless you change it.

But the feature does offer an extra level of comfort.

"Usually I remember to sign out, but every once in a while I wonder if I really did," Gmail engineer Erwin D'Souza wrote on a company blog. "Now I no longer have to wonder."

Other major Web e-mail providers - Yahoo Inc., Microsoft Corp.'s Hotmail, Time Warner Inc.'s AOL - also allow simultaneous sessions, but they do not provide similar notice or ability to remotely log off. However, AOL does have a setting forcing automatic logoff after as little as 30 minutes of inactivity. Microsoft said Hotmail will ask for a password if the session remains idle for too long.

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material herein is believed to be accurate at the time of publishing.